

BUSINESS AND OCCUPATION TAX

In computing business and occupation tax there may be deducted by taxpayers whose regular books of accounts are kept upon an accrual basis, the amount of business credit losses actually sustained, providing that such deduction will be allowed only with respect to transactions upon which a tax has been previously paid and providing that the amount thereof has not been otherwise deducted and that credits have not been issued with respect thereto.

Bad debt deductions must be taken by the taxpayer during the tax reporting period during which such bad debts were actually charged off on the taxpayer's books of account.

In cases where the amount of bad debts legitimately charged off in a particular reporting period exceeds the gross income for such period, the excess of the amount of the bad debts charged off during such period may be deducted from the gross income of the subsequent tax reporting period.

A dishonored (bad) check which proves to be uncollectible is a bad debt, to the extent it was taken as payment for goods or services on which business tax was previously reported and paid.

EXTRACTING OR MANUFACTURING, SPECIAL APPLICATION. Bad debt deductions will be allowed under the extracting or manufacturing classifications only when the value of products is computed on the basis of gross proceeds of sales.

RETAIL SALES TAX

A seller is entitled to a credit or refund for sales taxes previously paid on debts which are deductible, on and after January 1, 1983, as worthless for federal income tax purposes.

PUBLIC UTILITY TAX

In computing public utility tax credit losses may be deducted under the same conditions set out under the business and occupation tax. However, the special provisions set out for the extracting and manufacturing classifications are not applicable to the public utility tax.

METHODS OF DETERMINING CREDIT LOSSES. The amount of credit losses actually sustained must be determined in accordance with one of the following methods:

(1) Specific charge-off method. The amount which is charged off within the tax reporting period with respect to debts ascertained to be worthless.

(a) Worthlessness of a debt is usually evidenced when all the surrounding and attending circumstances indicate that legal action to enforce payment would result in an uncollectible judgment.

(b) A "charge-off" of a debt, either wholly or in part, must be evidenced by entry in the taxpayer's books of account.

(2) Reserve method. In the discretion of the department of revenue a reasonable addition to a reserve for bad debts will be authorized to taxpayers who charge off credit losses at the end of their taxable year but who desire to apportion such losses on a monthly basis.

(a) This will be permitted, in lieu of the specific charge-off method, only to taxpayers who have established or are allowed by the internal revenue service to use for federal income tax purposes, the reserve method of treating bad debts, or who, upon securing permission from the department adopt that method.

(b) What constitutes a reasonable addition to a reserve for bad debts must be determined in light of the facts and will vary between classes of

business and with conditions of business prosperity. The addition to the reserve allowed as a deduction by the internal revenue service for federal income tax purposes, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, will be presumed reasonable.

If the taxpayer actually determines and charges off bad debts on a tax reporting period basis, the amount so charged off each period shall be considered prima facie as a proper deduction for such period.

When bad debt losses are ascertained annually upon specific charge-off method, the deduction must be taken against the gross amount reported for the period in which the bad debts were actually charged off.

When the reserve method is employed in taking deductions for bad debts on returns and the amount of debts actually ascertained to be wholly or partially worthless and charged against the reserve account during the taxable year and reported do not agree with the amount of reserve set up therefor, adjustment of the amount of loss deducted shall be made to make the total amount claimed for the tax year coincide with the amount of loss actually sustained.

RECOVERIES. Amounts subsequently received on account of a bad debt or on account of a part of such debt previously charged off and allowed as a deduction for business tax purposes, must be included in gross proceeds of sales (including value of products when measured by gross proceeds of sales) or gross income of the business reported for the taxable period in which received. This is true even though the recoveries during such period exceed the amount of the bad debt charge-off.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.32.300. 83-07-032 (Order ET 83-15), '458-20-196, filed 3/15/83; Order ET 70-3, '458-20-196 (Rule 196), filed 5/29/70, effective 7/1/70.]